

CONNECTIONS

News and Views of Oxford County United Churches

Vol 3 Issue 8

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GO DEEP. LEARN TOGETHER.

People are shaped by their context. Faith communities are unique in their context. To learn in our own context is powerful. In this month's stories, **look for the new beginnings in Oxford.** Stories have once again been organized around the 3-fold pattern of the journey to the cross reminding us that our Christian calling is an ongoing invitation to go deeper and to go together.

OUR CONTEXT (pg 2) includes what's happening in our Communities of Faith – welcoming a new minister at Princeton-Etonia, a harrowing story from the OURS Committee re a new refugee family from Iran, the de-commissioning service of Oxford Centre UC, and an exciting local (due to the benefits of technology), learning opportunity about ecotheology and discipleship with Rev Dr Jessica Hetherington on September 22.

JESUS' WAY (pg 7) – the pain of the Cross: Sharing Circle with Six Nations, a podcast review from Fuller Seminary on The Church after the Pandemic, Federal Election reflections and resources, the new Federal Statutory Holiday: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30.

GOD'S LOVE (pg 9) – becoming more human through prayer for each other, the wonder of creation in Emperor Penguins, the great swap meet on September 25 in Embro to keep things out of the landfill, our worship, our social and ecological justice initiatives.



Marg Murray co-editor



FOOD FOR THE SOUL

September - A New Beginning (Luke 4:16-21)

Some of are old enough to recall a 1962 song "Try to Remember", written by Tom Jones and recorded by Jerry Orbach. The lyrics, include "Try to remember the kind of September when grass was green, and grain was yellow." If that's not in your memory, you can Google "Jerry Orbach Sept" (you may recognize Jerry as one of the detectives on TV's Law and Order.) The song concludes with, "Deep in December it's nice to remember that without a hurt the heart is hollow." **What keeps this ballad from pure nostalgia is the words, "And if you remember, follow."**

If December is not just a month but a metaphor, Covid19 and its variants have put the church and the world into deep December darkness. It is now September, and many congregations will be back worshipping in buildings that they left 18 months ago.

December darkness, unfortunately, seems to plague the world. While we should have left the pandemic behind, through vaccinations, the fourth wave is upon us. With wildfires and floods like never before, it is evident that climate change is real and is threatening. Afghanistan promises to be another Syria. We scramble to find hope.

Sometimes we forget that most of our Bible was written from the dark places of history. Bible scholar John Dominic Crossan suggests that the possibility of Rome building a city and urbanizing lower Galilee may have been a factor in Jesus' decision to begin his ministry when he did. For Jews

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under pressure from Rome, the September story of hope was the vision of Isaiah. When the Messiah comes. . ." the poor will hear good news, the oppressed will be set free" ... So, when Jesus begins his ministry in the synagogue and chooses to read that Isaiah story, **the worshippers settle in for a nostalgic trip. But Jesus says, "Today it is fulfilled." In other words, "Now is the time. Let's do it! Come! Follow!" it changed everything.**

So, will this Sept. worship be the same? Not likely. Covid 19 protocol will still be in place, the congregation may be smaller in number, although surrounded by on-line members and adherents. Worshippers may remember Jesus' words, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there." We forget that the gathering in Jesus' name in the first century put the group at risk. Larger groups such as Pentecost meant greater risk. But they met and emerged with tongues of flames not just over their heads but in their belly.

The church's agenda may be different. If we are to "free people from oppression", churches will be more intentional in reducing their carbon footprint. Covid 19 will still isolate some people, increasing the need for pastoral care.

Worship in September will be different. The church has changed. It is a new beginning. It is a victory. The Spirit will be there. It will be good. It will be enough.

Blessings.

Glen Wright, Co-editor



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This 3-fold pattern of the theology of the cross (Our Context, Jesus' Way, God's Love) is adapted from work of Oxford native, the Rev. Dr. Douglas John Hall. This fall as we prepare for the federal election, we live in the urgent reality of a warming climate, 4th wave of the Covid virus, economic worries about a just transition. Still, we think about our faith, trusting God to be with us in these challenging times.

OUR CONTEXT



COMINGS AND GOINGS AROUND OXFORD

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP:

We hold in our hearts and prayers those communities of faith as they journey to live out God's mission.

- **Avondale UC** (Tillsonburg) and Otterville UC continue to interview candidates.
- **Hickson UC** – no update.
- **Norwich UC** approved a shared Ministry agreement with KTV (Kelvin, Teeterville, Vanessa) Pastoral Charge and are pleased to welcome Janice Pow as half-time minister.
- **Beachville (Sweaburg)** - West Oxford Pastoral Charge completed their profiles and are setting up a Search Team.
- **Foldens UC** to worship with Sweaburg – West Oxford.
- **Burgessville UC.**
- **Peace UC (Plattsville)** engaged Rev Bonnie Pilkey short-term appointment September 1, - December 31, 2021.
- **Oxford Centre UC** held a decommissioning service in June.

Former Oxford Presbytery Members on the Move!

Rev Bonnie Pilkey has accepted a short-term appointment to Peace UC.

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JANE BAXTER, NEW MINISTER AT PRINCETON-ETONIA Pastoral Charge A warm welcome to Jane.



Hello to my new community of friends. I am Jane Baxter, a 2nd year student at the Atlantic School of Theology and a Candidate for ordained ministry in the United Church of Canada. I began my appointment at Princeton-Etonia United Churches August 16, 2021. I look forward to getting to know both communities of Etonia and Princeton, participating in community activities as our society will become safer to do so, sharing worship experiences with all peoples in the communities and taking part in outreach programs. Prior to fulfilling my call and entering into seminary, I was an Administrative Assistance for twenty-four years in elementary schools in the Grand Erie District School Board. My mother and I live together in Brantford, and I also have a daughter living out of the country, a son and two grandsons. **God has certainly blessed me with family and the opportunity to live out my life calling of ministry. I look forward to meeting the people in the Princeton-Etonia Pastoral Charge and in the wider community.** My Sunday Worship services commenced Sunday, August 22, 2021, at 10 a.m. at Etonia United Church.

OURS

ANNUAL MEETING

Sunday September 19 1:00 pm

St David's UC, Woodstock

All welcome – especially those interested in assisting refugees to come to Canada.

(OURS) OXFORD UNITED REFUGEE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

(Caution to readers – the story of the refugee family to be supported by Trinity UC contains heart wrenching details. Read with compassion and prayer.)

St. David's in Woodstock submitted Applications to the United Church office in Toronto July 2000 to co-sponsor Mussie Habte and Kidane Habte, 2 young Eritreans living in Ethiopia as refugees. The co-sponsor is an uncle of the boys and was sponsored by St David's many years ago. **We received the good news on August 18 that the applications have now been submitted to IRCC-ROCO for approval.** We should hear by 60 days from the notification if they are approved and, if so, the applications will be forwarded overseas to complete the approval process.



The Temnewu family are still waiting for their interview and final approval as is Bisrat



Yemane, another Eritrean who is in Sudan as a refugee.

It has been a long wait.

The people of Trinity United in Ingersoll have begun the application process to co-sponsor an Iraqi family of 5 **who escaped to Turkey to protect their children following the abduction and brutal murder of their 12-year-old son.** The terrorist organization responsible, demanded the father give them the keys to his employer's office and disable the alarm system or something terrible would happen to their family. The employer was a prominent Baghdad lawyer who had many clients involved in the petroleum industry. The father refused to help them. Soon after, the son was kidnapped from a taxi on his way to school. The co-sponsor, who was

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sponsored by Trinity several years ago along with her family, is a sister to the father.

The OURS committee acts in a supportive roll for all of the sponsorships; offering guidance, facilitating the preparation of applications, and, when needed, communicating with the United Churches of Oxford to give others an opportunity to contribute to this work. At the time of the family's arrival and in the months after, we are there to help with settlement.

Facilitating the transition from a life of fear and suffering to adjustment to a new country and language and eventual independence is rewarding. One begins to see our country in new ways through an immigrant child's laughter and a parent's gratitude for a new beginning. We are truly blessed to be Canadian.

*Submitted by Marj Martin,
Chairperson of the OURS committee*



[Facebook page](#) and
[website.](#)

Camp Tanner would like to thank the communities for their amazing support of their Bottle and Can Drive. Over \$2000.00 was raised. Special thanks to Dundas St. United Church, Trinity United Church (Ingersoll). Knox United (Embrow) and the Drumbo Richwood Pastoral Charge for the use of their parking lots and Tavistock Bottle Depot for their support. Thanks to the volunteers who donated their time and their trucks.

Sincerely, Sheila Greason

DECOMMISSIONING SERVICE OF OXFORD CENTRE UC

The Decommissioning Service of Oxford Centre United Church took place on a hot, bright, sunny, and very breezy Sunday afternoon, June 27, 2021, with about 80 people present. We appreciate that the Committee secured a huge tent for protection.

Rev. Lori Minler of Mt. Elgin United Church opened the gathering reminding us of God's constant love and care.

Organist Brenda Arnott accompanied as we sang "All the Way My Saviour Leads Me". Everyone agreed that it was wonderful to worship together in song once again.

Wayne Buchanan gave a history of the Church remembering special events that took place, including some humorous ones. He welcomed our special guest ministers from the past: Rev. John Brown, Rev. Allan Warren, and Rev. Heather Weaver-Oroz. The Baptism Font, Communion Table and Pulpit were brought into the tent. Rev Lori and Rev Allan called on representatives of the various bodies of the Church to bring forward symbols of their work within the Church to place on the Communion Table:

- from the Session, these included the Minute Book, Communion Set and Pitcher of Water, the Record books of Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals
- from the Sunday School, crafts, curriculum, books and CDs



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- from the United Church Women – coffee urn and serving bowl remembering banquets, luncheons, learning and working together
- from the Study Group, Bible and Study Group material
- from the Choir, Choir gown and hymn book
- from the Trustees, hammer and drill bits
- from the Newsletter Editor, a copy of A Snoopy's Review – a monthly reminder of events, meetings, birthdays, jokes and activities for children
- from Fellowship Club – a scrap book of activities over the years prepared by long time member Muriel Buchanan.

Clare Buchanan read 'Memories from Christ Church Oxford Centre' recalling the many wonderful joint functions that have been held over the years. Wayne Buchanan shared memories on behalf of the Congregation noting that all three former ministers present had a special sense of humor, especially when a cell phone rings in a Church Service (including one that afternoon!!).

Addison and Tracey Ebert offered a special vocal tribute "The Gift of Love".

Distinctive memories were given by –

- Rev. Allan Warren, 1988-2000 based on Romans 16:20b-27a
- Rev. Heather Weaver-Oroz, 2004-2007 based on Acts 8: 1b-3
- Rev. John Brown – 1971-1978 based on Luke 24: 28-49

All three ministers felt that they and their families had been extended a wonderful welcome by the Oxford Centre United Church Community. All were made to feel at home.

Rev. Allan Warren gave the message for the afternoon "Saying Goodbye: Keeping the Faith". Worship closed with the Hymn "Let Us Build a House".

DECOMMISSIONING

Rev. Warren: Today we have celebrated with thanksgiving the life and work of the faith community of Oxford Centre United Church. It has served as a witness to God's presence for 161 years. It has provided refuge, comfort, and challenges for God's people. It has served for generations the faithful people of this community.

Rev. Lori Minler, Representative of Antler River Watershed: This building dedicated and named Oxford Centre United Church, together with the land on which it stands and all objects remaining in it, we now commend to other purposes. **We declare June 27th, 2021, it is no longer the place of meeting of a congregation of the United Church of Canada.**

Adapted from the submission of Wayne Buchanan of Oxford Centre United Church

Editor's note – Responding to our request for a picture of Oxford Centre UC, Wayne sent in 2 pictures. The first is the front of the church, the second, with the rainbow,



was taken by a neighbour from the rear of the church the day after decommissioning. A poignant reminder of God's promise to be with us always.



To order books call 1-888-668-0871, email sales@grandriverbooks.com. **Order books online** [here](#). Mail delivery \$5.00.

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Hotlinks are:
[Website,](#)
[Facebook Page](#)

OPERATION SHARING

We are thankful for the continuing outreach of Operation Sharing. It is much needed and valued particularly during the pandemic. The volunteers and staff of Operation Sharing deeply appreciate our support.

STILL NEEDED

The details of items needed are on [page 9 of June Issue of CONNECTIONS](#):

- Taxable Items Cupboard. Call Bonnie at 519-539-3361.
- Food For Friends
- Woodstock: Bullwinkle's Eatery and Hospitality Training Centre
- A Homeless Shelter - The Inn
- Good Clean Clothing - all ages
- Extended Family Project Help for Students email Eric Schmiedl at ericschmiedl@yahoo.ca or call 519-539-5926

\$ DONATIONS

Two ways to donate to the programs of Operation Sharing: webpage [here](#) or mail Treasurer of Operation Sharing, P.O. Box 20081, Woodstock, Ontario, N4S 8X8.



Current programs and possibilities are on their [webpage](#).

A sacred place for peoples of all faiths as well as spiritual seekers to gather in community to live, work, learn, pray, play, heal and act for justice.

ECOTHEOLOGY – the interconnectedness of everything Here in Oxford **AN EXCITING NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITY**

Discover the connection between ecotheology and discipleship.



Join us and meet Rev. Dr. Jessica Hetherington who has taught ecotheology at St Paul University, Ottawa. Her subject is Ecological Practice as Discipleship.



Rev Douglas Peck of Kintore-Brooksdale UC will interview Rev Jessica of South Stormont Pastoral Charge which is on the St Lawrence River west of Cornwall.

WHEN? September 22, 2021
7:00 to 8:15 pm

HOW? to be part of this, please contact Rev. Doug at rev.douglas.peck@gmail.com to sign up for the Zoom link. Even if you are unable to make it on September 22, please sign up and we'll send you a recording of it

Rev. Jessica will address these questions:

- How did you come to study Eco-Theology?
- What is Eco-Theology?
- How can we as people of faith change our behaviour?
- How can we as congregations change our behaviour?
- Why should the church be part of this?

Note:

We are applying to the Oxford Legacy Fund ([April CONNECTIONS page 5](#)) for monthly sessions this fall, to go deeper with Rev Jessica. Each community of faith is encouraged to participate with both lay and clergy. This topic is timely and crucial.

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*On our journey of Jesus' Way, we hear the voices of those on the fringe of power - the vulnerable, the dispossessed and the suffering. Those of us living with our privilege gained from **power over** find it difficult to recognize that God is already there. But when we do, we are changed.*

JESUS' WAY

SIX NATIONS SHARING CIRCLE

(formerly Grandmother's Tea)

Participants in the August 23 Sharing Circle talked with each other about **"How are you feeling now that Covid 19 restrictions have opened up more."**

The next Sharing Circle is September 27, 1:30-3:30 pm.

For those interested, please contact Rhonda Johns at Nations Uniting nations.uniting@gmail.com for Zoom details.

FYI

Interests, Informs or Inspires!

READERS share ...the fiction you are reading, the movies you are watching or the songs you are singing!

PODCAST REVIEW

Feedback to August's CONNECTIONS elicited this suggestion from Rev Dr Bill Lord, former Director of Continuing Education at University of Toronto (TST): **"The church After the Pandemic -a podcast of Tod Bolsinger of Fuller Seminary** suggesting some very interesting questions for a church to ask about its DNA, core values, and charism. Bolsinger suggests ways to enter a dialogue with your local community and context."

Bolsinger 's podcast is part of a series of 'Leadership as Learning'. This interview talks about Context and Creativity. Since the pandemic has accelerated and exposed issues which have lain dormant in every congregation, we need to focus on being the healthiest version of who we are (our unique DNA). Solutions of creative new ways open up especially when together the leadership - **the minster and core people-examine their context. They talk to people in their neighbourhood about their lives – their pain points - and learn new ways to use their God given gifts to address the pain points** in their community and in the world. A valuable listen! MM

AN ELECTION THIS FALL? WOW!

Looks like our top issue should be the Environment.

A joke now circulating: When is someone considered to be environmentally friendly? When they are helping to push up the daisies. (Groan!)

In a recent Manchester Guardian article, readers wanting a more serious answer were asked to honestly answer six simple questions:

1. Where does your tap water come from and where does it end up? One day without water is a recipe for family meltdown.
2. What's the first bird that calls in the morning where you live? It may change with each season. Check with any local birder and pay attention.
3. What is the nearest wild edible plant to your back door? Weeds are often nutritious, even tasty. Be careful not to browse on polluted plants, especially from poisoned lawns.
4. What are your neighbours' names? You are part of a community; explore it. That begins with getting to know who lives there with you.

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5. Where is the moon in its lunar cycle right now? Go outside at night; look up and try to decide: waxing or waning? Maybe you need to check via the internet.
6. What are 2 common NATIVE trees that grow in your area? Chat with your local nursery to find out

This is not a test of your general knowledge, but it will help you to fall in love with the world you actually live in. Then you will honestly want to protect it. That will help you to become environmentally friendly. Then you will begin to move towards saving our planet. Good Luck!

(Manchester Guardian, May 14, 2021, adapted)

Olga McKellar



Federal Election Resource 2021

ELECTION DAY IS SEPT 20

Learn about the issues, the party platforms and **VOTE!** [KAIROS Canada](#) has prepared this excellent resource (see [here](#)) to learn about ecological justice (climate emergency and environmental racism), Indigenous Rights, Gender Justice (human rights and environmental abuses in extractive industries abroad), Migrant Justice (temporary foreign migrant workers), and Vaccine Equity Action (world).

In Oxford, Unifor 636 is hosting an ALL Candidates Debate on September 7, 7:00 -8:30 pm. This debate will be televised by Rogers TV in the days leading up to the election.

Federal Statutory Holiday: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, September 30

This is the first year that Canadians will have this statutory holiday. **How are you planning to celebrate that day?**



Will you be wearing an Orange Shirt on that day to remember and honour Indigenous children who were taken from their communities and families

to residential schools. You can read the story behind the Orange Shirt [here](#).

To learn about what is happening in **Indigenous Justice and Right Relations** across the regions of the United Church, register for the Indigenous Justice and Right Relations Networking Zoom Meeting

Wednesday, September 22 at 1:30 pm.

This is offered by the United Church tri-regions of Antler River Watershed, Horseshoe Falls and Western Ontario Waterways. An important way to connect with other individuals and groups interested in or involved in right relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Register [here](#).



The Social and Ecological Justice Network of the Antler River Watershed Region connects people who are passionate about social

justice concerns. Their website, <https://arwsej.ca>, is a valuable resource in Climate Justice/Crisis, Poverty, Boomer Spirituality, Middle East Justice, Canadian Foodgrains Bank, United Church Women, Right Relations and Mozambique.

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"Power over" dramatically affects any relationship and thus our ability to be human. God as love is **power with** (rather than power over). God's unconditional love **for us**, and implanted somehow **within us**, helps us become more fully human and alive with the Spirit. We care for each other (both next door and across the world) with respect and compassion and experience a love for creation that we have so long ignored.

GOD'S LOVE

-BECOMING HUMAN

PRAYER CYCLES

We are invited to pray each week for a Community of Faith in Oxford and in the Antler River Watershed Region. Prayer is sharing our concerns, joys and work. We are not alone in our work as we support one another.

For Oxford United Churches: list is [here](#).

Sept 12, Richwood, Michael Shewburg,
Sept 19, Peace (Plattsville), Bonnie Pilkey,
Sept 26, St David's (Wdsk), Jeffrey Smith,
Oct 3, **Retired Clergy**.

<https://tinyurl.com/Retired-Clergy-Oxford>.

Oct 10, **ARW Region** -Elected: Jane VanPatter and Executive

For ARW Region:

<https://www.prayercycles.ca/antlerriverwatershed>

Sept 12, [Sarnia: Grace](#)

Sep 19: [St. Andrew's, Cairo](#)

Sep 26: [Rodney](#)

Oct 3: [Kingsville: Epworth](#)

Oct 10: [Ailsa Craig](#)



FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES

Emperor Penguins



Emperor Penguins are amazing, not only because they are the giants of the penguin world at more than three feet tall and from 50 to 100 pounds, but because they spend their lives on Antarctic ice in minus 50

degree C temperatures. So, if you lived in an ice house in Antarctica, and invited a penguin for lunch she could stand at the table and eat shrimp right off your plate.

When the mother penguin lays her egg, her partner will keep it warm for two months until it hatches. The mother penguin goes off to spend a couple months or more at the ocean eating shrimp and krill. She needs to put on some weight so she can feed her chick when she returns. When she gets back she will find her mate and their penguin chick by the sound of her mate's voice, even though there will be thousands of penguins calling for their mates.

The father penguin does not eat during this time. When his mate returns to feed the baby penguin, he will go to the water, which could be up to 50 miles away and fish for a month to put back the weight he has lost.

In the coldest part of the winter, in a storm, the penguins huddle together to keep warm. There could be a thousand or more penguins in a huddle. Perhaps they should call it a huddle. That may be the largest group hug on the planet.

Now isn't that awesome? GW

PRAYER CHAIN

Please contact Prayer Chain Leader [Olga McKellar](#) for on-going prayer concerns.

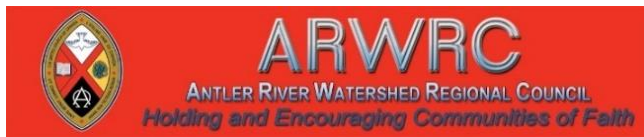


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[ARWRC webpage](#)

[Facebook page](#)

**Regional Council FALL Meeting -
Thursday October 28 to Sunday
October 31.** Expressions of interest
forms to serve available [here](#), where
further details will be posted.

**'There is NO OUT – when you
throw it out!'**



A FREE GREAT SWAP MEET
EMBRO COMMUNITY CENTRE
SATURDAY SEPT 25th
8:30 -NOON

A great way to meet folks, declutter,
stop the dump, reuse, recycle and
rethink. Join in with donations. Enjoy!



Hosted by the Township of Zorra

All volunteers get thanks, gratitude
and a gift of anything they want.

Reducing organic waste:

OPAL has prepared tips for use in your
kitchen! [Here](#) is their entertaining missive.

**Submit your requests from
the Oxford Legacy Fund
to Lynne Dunlop**
lynndunl@execulink.com
Details [April Connections](#)

WORSHIP SERVICES IN OXFORD

Check with individual churches re specifics
of in-person worship or availability of
streaming services:

[College Ave UC](#)

[Dundas St. UC](#)

[Hebron UC](#) - rsstock@execulink.com

[Innerkip UC](#)

[Kintore/Brooksdale UC](#)

[Knox UC, Embro](#)

[Mt Elgin UC](#)

[Norwich UC](#)

[Peace UC, Plattsville](#)

peaceunitedplattsville@gmail.com>.

[St. David's UC, Woodstock](#)

[St. Paul's UC, Tillsonburg](#)

[Trinity UC, Ingersoll](#)

[Westminster UC, Thamesford](#)

Willis UC, Drumbo Sunday services by
conference call. drumbocharge@hotmail.com

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Submissions and feedback welcome.

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**CONNECTIONS
website**